

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A cart for transporting objects, said cart comprising:
a base structure upon which the objects may be disposed, said base structure having posterior and anterior ends and opposing first and second sides;
a pair of first wheels mounted to the base structure and disposed toward a first side of the base structure;
a pair of second wheels mounted to the base structure and disposed toward a second side of the base structure;
a housing mounted to the base structure and at least partially defining an interior channel, said housing extending in a longitudinal direction of the cart and being disposed midway along a width of the cart;
an elongated tongue ~~adapted for connection to another cart~~, said tongue having an inner end and an outer end, said tongue inner end being continuously being at least partially disposed in the channel while said tongue outer end being adapted for connection to another cart, said elongated tongue and being movable between a retracted position, wherein a majority of the tongue is disposed inside the channel, and an extended position, wherein a majority of the tongue is disposed outside the channel;

a tongue lock apparatus that is operable to lock the tongue in the extended and retracted positions, said tongue lock apparatus being actuated to unlock the tongue and thereby permit said tongue to move between the retracted and extended positions; and

an actuator, said actuator having a proximal end and a distal end, said actuator proximal end being received in the housing and connected to the elongated tongue inner end, said and having a actuator distal end being disposed laterally outward from the housing and the base structure so as to be at a position that is accessible for an operator on said first side of said base structure.

wherein, ~~when said tongue lock apparatus is actuated to unlock the tongue,~~ said actuator distal end is engaged and manipulated by the operator to move the tongue between the retracted and extended positions.

2. (Original) The cart of claim 1, wherein the actuator is movable along a linear path between a deactivated position and an activated position, wherein movement of the actuator from the deactivated position to the activated position moves the tongue from the retracted position to the extended position.

Claims 3-4 (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) The cart of claim 2, wherein the actuator includes an elongated extension rod, said rod extending laterally outward from the tongue at about a right angle from the tongue, wherein the actuator is spaced below the base structure.

Claims 6 – 7 (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) The cart of claim 75, wherein the actuator includes a foot plate having a planar contact surface disposed perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the cart.

9. (Original) The cart of claim 8, wherein when the foot plate is in the activated position, the foot plate is disposed proximate to a front one of the first wheels, and when the foot plate is in the deactivated position, the foot plate is disposed distal to the front one of the first wheels.

10. (Original) The cart of claim 9, wherein the foot plate has an outermost vertical edge that is disposed inwardly from an outermost portion of the base structure on the first side of the base structure.

11. (Original) The cart of claim 10, wherein the outermost vertical edge of the foot plate is disposed laterally outward from the first wheels when circumferences of the first wheels are aligned.

Claims 12 - 13 (Cancelled)

14. (Previously Presented) The cart of claim 5, wherein the base structure comprises a frame having first and second side bars at the first and second sides of the

base structure, respectively, said first side bar having at least one slot formed therein, said at least one slot extending in the longitudinal direction of the cart, and wherein the actuator is mounted to the first side bar so as to be movable along the at least one slot.

15. (Previously Presented) The cart of claim 14, wherein the extension rod extends through the at least one slot and is secured to the actuator distal end on a laterally outward side of the at least one slot.

16. (Previously Presented) The cart of claim 15, wherein the first side bar comprises a bottom wall joined between a pair of opposing inner and outer side walls, wherein the at least one slot comprises a pair of aligned slots formed in the inner and outer side walls, respectively, and wherein the actuator distal end is disposed adjacent an outer surface of the outer side wall and covers a portion of the slot formed therein.

17. (Original) The cart of claim 16, wherein the aligned slots are partially defined by interior front and rear edges of the inner and outer side walls, respectively, and wherein the interior front edges determine the activated position of the actuator and the interior rear edges determine the deactivated position of the actuator.

18. (Original) The cart of claim 17, further comprising a roller through which the extension rod extends, said roller being supported on the bottom wall of the first side bar, between the inner and outer side walls of the first side bar.

19. (Original) The cart of claim 18, wherein the actuator comprises a block-shaped pedal.

20. (Previously Presented) The cart of claim 2, wherein the actuator includes a cable that connects the actuator distal end to the actuator proximal end.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) The cart of claim 24~~20~~, further comprising vertically-extending first and second posts disposed at opposing front corners of the cart, respectively, said first post having a vertically extending slot formed therein, said slot being partially defined by interior top and bottom edges of the first post, and wherein the actuator is mounted to the first post for movement along the slot.

23. (Original) The cart of claim 22, wherein the interior top edge determines the activated position of the actuator and the interior bottom edge determines the deactivated position of the actuator.

24. (Original) The cart of claim 23, wherein the actuator comprises a grip and a connector body, said grip being disposed adjacent an outer surface of the first post and covering a portion of the slot, and said connector body being disposed inside the first post.

25. (Original) The cart of claim 24, wherein a first end of the cable is connected to the connector body, inside the first post, and a second end of the cable is connected to a rear portion of the tongue.

26. (Original) The cart of claim 25, further comprising a plurality of pulleys around which the cable extends, said pulleys changing the direction of the cable at least twice.

27. (Original) The cart of claim 26, wherein the plurality of pulleys comprises a first pulley mounted to the first post so as to be rotatable around a horizontal axis and a second pulley mounted to the base structure so as to be rotatable around a vertical axis.

28. (Original) The cart of claim 27, wherein the first pulley is disposed inside the first post and the second pulley is disposed inside the base structure.

29 (Cancelled)

30. (Currently Amended) A cart for transporting objects, said cart comprising:
a base structure upon which the objects may be disposed, said base structure
having posterior and anterior ends and opposing first and second sides;
a pair of first wheels mounted to the base structure and disposed toward a first
side of the base structure;

a pair of second wheels mounted to the base structure and disposed toward a second side of the base structure;

a housing mounted to the base structure and at least partially defining an interior channel, said housing extending in a longitudinal direction of the cart and being disposed midway along a width of the cart;

an elongated tongue adapted for connection to another cart, said tongue being at least partially disposed in the channel and being movable between a retracted position, wherein a majority of the tongue is disposed inside the channel, and an extended position, wherein a majority of the tongue is disposed outside the channel;

a tongue lock apparatus that is operable to lock the tongue in the extended and retracted positions, said tongue lock apparatus being actuated to unlock the tongue and thereby permit said tongue to move between the retracted and extended positions; and

an actuator, said actuator having a proximal end received in the housing and connected to the tongue and having a distal end disposed laterally outward from the housing at a position that is accessible for an operator,

wherein, when said tongue lock apparatus is actuated to unlock the tongue, said actuator being operable, upon engagement and manipulation by the operator, is engaged and manipulated by the operator to move the tongue from between the retracted position to the and extended position positions,

~~The cart of claim 1,~~ wherein the housing comprises a bottom wall having a roller opening formed therein, wherein a first roller is mounted to the bottom wall and at least partially extends through the roller opening, and wherein a second roller is mounted to the tongue, and wherein the tongue is movably supported above the bottom wall of the

housing by the first and second rollers.

31 - 46 (Cancelled)

47. (New) The cart of claim 30, wherein the actuator is movable along a linear path between a deactivated position and an activated position, wherein movement of the actuator from the deactivated position to the activated position moves the tongue from the retracted position to the extended position.

48. (New) The cart of claim 47, wherein the actuator includes an elongated extension rod, said rod extending laterally outward from the tongue at about a right angle from the tongue.

49. (New) The cart of claim 48, further comprising front and rear structures and first and second side structures secured to the base structure and extending upwardly therefrom, and wherein the actuator is spaced below the base structure.

50. (New) The cart of claim 49, wherein the actuator includes a foot plate having a planar contact surface disposed perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the cart.

51. (New) The cart of claim 50, wherein when the foot plate is in the activated position, the foot plate is disposed proximate to a front one of the first wheels, and

when the foot plate is in the deactivated position, the foot plate is disposed distal to the front one of the first wheels.

52. (New) The cart of claim 51, wherein the foot plate has an outermost vertical edge that is disposed inwardly from an outermost portion of the base structure on the first side of the base structure.

53. (New) The cart of claim 52, wherein the outermost vertical edge of the foot plate is disposed laterally outward from the first wheels when circumferences of the first wheels are aligned.

54. (New) The cart of claim 47, wherein the base structure comprises a frame having first and second side bars at the first and second sides of the base structure, respectively, said first side bar having at least one slot formed therein, said at least one slot extending in the longitudinal direction of the cart, and wherein the actuator is mounted to the first side bar so as to be movable along the at least one slot.

55. (New) The cart of claim 54, wherein the extension rod extends through the at least one slot and is secured to the actuator distal end on a laterally outward side of the at least one slot.

56. (New) The cart of claim 53, wherein the first side bar comprises a bottom wall joined between a pair of opposing inner and outer side walls, wherein the at least

one slot comprises a pair of aligned slots formed in the inner and outer side walls, respectively, and wherein the actuator distal end is disposed adjacent an outer surface of the outer side wall and covers a portion of the slot formed therein.

57. (New) The cart of claim 56, wherein the aligned slots are partially defined by interior front and rear edges of the inner and outer side walls, respectively, and wherein the interior front edges determine the activated position of the actuator and the interior rear edges determine the deactivated position of the actuator.

58. (New) The cart of claim 57, wherein the actuator comprises a block-shaped pedal.

59. (New) The cart of claim 30, wherein the actuator includes a cable that connects the actuator distal end to the actuator proximal end.

59. (New) The cart of claim 61, further comprising vertically-extending first and second posts disposed at opposing front corners of the cart, respectively, said first post having a vertically extending slot formed therein, said slot being partially defined by interior top and bottom edges of the first post, and wherein the actuator is mounted to the first post for movement along the slot.

60. (New) The cart of claim 59, wherein the interior top edge determines the activated position of the actuator and the interior bottom edge determines the

deactivated position of the actuator.

61. (New) The cart of claim 60, wherein the actuator comprises a grip and a connector body, said grip being disposed adjacent an outer surface of the first post and covering a portion of the slot, and said connector body being disposed inside the first post.

62. (New) The cart of claim 61, wherein a first end of the cable is connected to the connector body, inside the first post, and a second end of the cable is connected to a rear portion of the tongue.

63. (New) The cart of claim 62, further comprising a plurality of pulleys around which the cable extends, said pulleys changing the direction of the cable at least twice.

64. (New) The cart of claim 63, wherein the plurality of pulleys comprises a first pulley mounted to the first post so as to be rotatable around a horizontal axis and a second pulley mounted to the base structure so as to be rotatable around a vertical axis.

65. (New) The cart of claim 64, wherein the first pulley is disposed inside the first post and the second pulley is disposed inside the base structure.

66. (New) The cart of claim 1, further comprising a tongue lock apparatus that is

operable to lock the tongue in the extended and retracted positions, said tongue lock apparatus being actuated to unlock the tongue and thereby permit said tongue to move between the retracted and extended positions, wherein said actuator is adapted to be manipulated by the operator to move the tongue between the retracted and extended positions only when said tongue lock apparatus is actuated to unlock the tongue.

67. (New) The cart of claim 66, wherein the actuator includes an elongated extension rod, said rod extending laterally outward from the tongue at about a right angle from the tongue, wherein the actuator is spaced below the base structure, and wherein the actuator includes a foot plate having a planar contact surface disposed perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the cart.

68. (New) The cart of claim 66, wherein the base structure comprises a frame having first and second side bars at the first and second sides of the base structure, respectively, said first side bar having at least one slot formed therein, said at least one slot extending in the longitudinal direction of the cart, wherein the actuator is mounted to the first side bar so as to be movable along the at least one slot, and wherein the extension rod extends through the at least one slot and is secured to the actuator distal end on a laterally outward side of the at least one slot.

69. (New) The cart of claim 66, wherein the actuator includes a cable that connects the actuator distal end to the actuator proximal end, said cart further comprising vertically-extending first and second posts disposed at opposing front

corners of the cart, respectively, said first post having a vertically extending slot formed therein, said slot being partially defined by interior top and bottom edges of the first post, and wherein the actuator is mounted to the first post for movement along the slot, and wherein the interior top edge determines the activated position of the actuator and the interior bottom edge determines the deactivated position of the actuator.